

Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force Meeting Summary and Notes July 18, 2018

I. Introduction

- Conway Collis started off the meeting by noting that the TF has about 80 days to accomplish quite a bit. This includes development of subcommittees draft recommendations and fiscal estimates for proposals, establishing ramp-ups of programs, and prioritizing them. He noted that between July and September, the research team will work with subcommittees on the numbers.
- Conway then quickly reviewed the May meeting and reported on the community meetings in Los Angeles and Fresno. There were 95 attendees representing 21 community organizations in Los Angeles and 75 individuals representing 18 community organizations in Fresno. Themes of meetings included 1) focus on community and family; 2) inclusions of services for LGBT community; 3) reentry services following incarceration; 4) ongoing issues of racism; 5) need for financial literacy education; and 6) importance of housing. In LA, 76 percent of response forms named housing as the key issue, and about 40 percent mentioned education as key. The results were somewhat similar for Fresno (43 percent of responses focused on housing, and 46 percent on education).

II. Race Counts – John Kim, Advancement Project

Presentation Highlights:

- The Race Counts project is an online data tool that ranks California's 58 counties by 7 issue areas (public safety, education, health, environment, housing, economic opportunity, and governance). It was developed by the Advancement Project in conjunction with 85 partner organizations.
- The project is intended to provide key data to community organizations to advance improvements in the seven issue areas.
- As an example, John referred to the first slide of his presentation, which compared the concentration of gunshot victims and the location of trauma centers. It showed a mismatch, which John referred to "allergic" resource planning (the tendency to place highly needed resources in places other than where the need is the highest). He indicated that this phenomenon is endemic throughout the State. Race is the common denominator of "allergic" planning.
- More detail on the mapping tool:

- Within each of 7 issue areas, there are several indicators (44 indicators total). For example:
 - In the area of housing, indicators include income-left-after-housing-costs (for renters and owners), foreclosure rates, loan types, housing quality, and homeownership.
 - In the area of economic opportunity, key indicators are employment, median household income, percent below the poverty level, workforce in professional and managerial positions, internet access, denied mortgage application, and business ownership.
- For each indicator within each county, there is information on performance, ranking, and disparity of results between racial groups.
- John then went through several slides showing 3-D mapping of performance and disparities in one or more of the 7 issue areas.

Main recommendations for the Task Force:

- Do not ignore interaction of poverty and race. Disparities point toward localization of policy solutions. There is a “clear typology of need by geography.”
- It is important to root out bias baked into public systems, and undertake policies that promote equity.
- The TF is positioned to “think bigger about a collective narrative for California, re-envisioned for a multiracial era.”
- The TF might use the tool to set targets and consider different policy/program vehicles for different populations.

Task Force questions/comments:

- A TF member suggested that the tool might benefit from comparisons to other states.
- A TF member asked whether the tool captures the burden of housing costs on various racial groups. (John pointed to several such indicators, including the income-left-after-housing-costs measure discussed above.)
- A TF member asked about the indicators for education. (John mentioned high school graduation, suspension, and access to higher education.)
- A TF member suggested that the data should be shared with the business community. John agreed, citing an example related to Canada. More generally, he indicated that the tool enables community organizers to convey to policymakers and other interested parties which issues are important locally, and which issues the county/locality struggles with.

- Conway asked how we could incorporate this information into task force recommendations. For example, how would the tool be used in conjunction with a recommendation to, for example, expand childcare? John indicated that the tool would help take the proposal to the next level, by enabling policymakers to target communities specifically and differently. He also pointed out that the tool helps deliver a more “collective” narrative. When a policy is framed, the tool helps convey how a policy will help the whole community as opposed to being viewed as charity.

III. Family Homelessness and Housing Instability – Mary Cunningham, Urban Institute

Presentation Highlights:

- Housing is a key driver of stability, economic mobility and prosperity. Need housing in high-opportunity areas. It is the key to everything.
- About 48 million live at or below the poverty line in the U.S. Of this total, about 23 million are at risk of homelessness, and 1.5 million are actually homeless.
- Typology of homeless families: 70%-80% are temporarily caught in homelessness (in need of rapid re-housing services); about 20% are long-term homeless (in need of housing subsidies); and 5%-8% are episodic homeless (in need of supportive housing).
 - At this point, a TF member asked whether there is any correlation between the type of homelessness and affordability? Mary indicated that trends are similar across geographic areas with different housing costs and affordability levels, suggesting that the distribution by type is independent of housing costs/affordability.
 - Another TF member indicated that despite rapid rehousing subsidies, many people in high cost coastal regions in California still can’t afford to pay rent. This raises the important question of what to do after a rapid rehousing intervention if a financial gap exists.
 - Mary indicated that rapid rehousing is not a panacea, but it helps the system work better. Emergency shelters are expensive, so need to get families out of them. But other affordability issues are clearly a problem so there is a need to do more on the affordable housing end.
- Mary next presented evidence from a family options study that people assigned to rapid rehousing programs got out of shelters in an average of 3.2 months, versus 3.8 months for those assigned to usual care. RRH also correlated with a modest increase in income – at least in the first 18 months.
- Supportive housing is expensive, thus needs to be targeted to highest need families. Data suggest that supportive housing should be first on

list toward addressing child welfare services goals. For instance, targeting families at the beginning of involvement with child welfare services for housing support (instead of after, as an award), and use housing as a platform to achieve child welfare goals (extending the housing first approach to child welfare).

- More generally, housing “buys” more than housing stability. Families with housing vouchers have less food insecurity, fewer foster care placements, and less domestic violence.
- Goals should be more affordable housing and more vouchers, with families with young children (under 6), or pregnant women, receiving the highest priority. Priority of resources should be (1) rapid rehousing, (2) supportive housing, (3) services, and (4) vouchers.

IV. Place-Based Strategies That Work **Ophelia Basgal, Turner Center for Housing Innovation, UC Berkeley**

Presentation Highlights:

- Ophelia presented 3 examples of where collaboration of existing programs can have positive impacts.
 - The first is in the area of health. Ophelia’s initial point was that poverty makes people sick. There is a strong connection between the quality of housing and health. Children spend a lot of time indoors at home. A safe and decent home is like a vaccine.
 - She then discussed the *Alameda County Pay for Success Asthma Initiative*.
 - The reason for the initiative: asthma has had a major impact on the County in terms of both the high costs of healthcare and school district problems related to chronic absenteeism and poor academic performance.
 - Alameda County has two existing interventions working together. One is Asthma START, and the other is the Department of Healthy Homes.
 - Asthma START includes psycho-social assessment of children’s health needs, health education, an asthma management plan, check-in to affirm behavior changes, and referral to healthy homes for environmental and home remediation.
 - The Department of Healthy Homes includes a visual assessment of the home, health and housing education, environmental treatment, removal of asthma triggers, technical assistance to property owner, and coordination with Code Enforcement.
 - The combination of these two programs has had a variety of positive outcomes, including reduced hospitalization days and reduced missed days at school.

- The second example is in the area of education – the Tacoma WA Housing Authority – McCarver Elementary Assistance Program.
 - The student population at McCarver is among the poorest in Tacoma, with a high number of homeless families.
 - The program consists of rental assistance to 50 homeless families with children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade. Other features include:
 - Agreements by parents to keep children in school, participate in the children’s education, and invest in their own education and employment.
 - Investments made by the district to earn the designation as an International Baccalaureate School.
 - An attendance early-warning program, where data is exchanged between the school and Tacoma Housing Authority.
 - The program has resulted in a major decline in student turnover rate, increases in academic achievement (comparable to general school population by the end of the 4th year), and increased average earned income of cohort families.
- Third example relates to the digital divide – i.e., lack of access to the Internet by low- and moderate- income households contributes to social inequality. Effects are pervasive.
 - A collaborative program addressing this problem (The California Advanced Services Funds – Public Housing Account) provides broadband access in publicly supported housing communities.
 - Program was implemented in December 2014, with approximately \$9.6 million awarded to date for infrastructure projects connecting 23,000 housing units in 35 counties. \$2.6 million spent for digital literacy training for 18,155 residents.
 - Program will continue through 2020.

Recommendations to Task Force:

- State government should use its power to promote collaborations between programs. These should include data sharing and coordination on funding. Programs should have flexibility built in.

Task Force questions/comments:

- A TF member asked who was involved in putting together the Asthma initiative. Who put together asthma plans? (The County, with input from home health workers).

V. Do Minimum Wages Help Alleviate Poverty? Sylvia A. Allegretto, PhD., CWED, UC Berkeley

Presentation Highlights:

- Statistics on Poverty: The U.S. poverty rate was 12.7 percent in 2016, which translates into 40.6 million people. Of this total, 7.6 million are working poor. Of workers, 4.9 percent are in poverty (3.1 percent full time and 12.4 percent part time). Women, Blacks, and Latinos are relatively more likely to be poor.
- There has been virtually no improvement in the poverty rate over the past 36 years. We have made major progress since the 1960s with respect to poverty of seniors, but none with respect to the working age population poverty rate.
- Sylvia then presented findings of a recent study by Arindrajit Dube (*Minimum Wages and the Distribution of Family Incomes in the United States*, April 2017), which found that higher minimum wages are associated with clear increases in incomes among families at the bottom of the income distribution. She acknowledged that other studies on minimum wage have come to different conclusions, but asserted that this one was carefully crafted and reliable.
- The implications of the Dube study for a U.S. minimum wage of \$12 per hour:
 - A decrease in the federal nonelderly poverty rate by 2.45 percentage points – or 6.6 million individuals.
 - A reduction in government EITC and related payments, which could be reallocated to shore up the safety net in other ways.
 - A 1 percent or so increase in prices borne by middle and upper-middle income consumers.
- Sylvia's bottom line is that benefits of minimum wage increases outweigh the costs.

Task Force questions/comments:

- A TF member asked whether there is good data on the relationship between minimum wage increases and automation. Sylvia stated that the idea that automation is reducing jobs is wrong. Worker productivity is falling and the economy faces labor shortages despite automation. We are still feeling the effects of the great recession, so the labor force is not as tight as it seems, but in general, there is limited evidence that robots are taking away jobs. Robots are complementing workers.
- A second TF member asked whether the minimum wage increase will be offset by rental increases. Sylvia cited a recent paper that found a correlation, but said she was skeptical of the size of the pass-through.

VI. Reducing Effects of Poverty within the Juvenile Justice and Criminal Justice Systems

Allen Nance, Chief Probation Officer, San Francisco

Presentation Highlights:

- In 2017, there were 35,000 in Juvenile Probation, of which 20,000 were in wardship, 4,500 were in juvenile detention/camps, 2,665 in foster care probation, and 8,000 in informal probation.
- Since 2007, 50 percent fewer are in the system due to SB 81.
- 68% case outcomes occur before wardship. Most are diverted or given informal probation. Commitments to State youth authority are way down.
- Children in families without a high school diploma are more likely to live in poverty. In 2015, 21.6 percent of youth lived in poverty. Without safety net measures, the percentage would be 36 percent.
- Criminal justice-related activities affecting adults have a large impact on children, sometimes leading to juvenile justice involvement. How can we reduce involvement? Many offenses are economic based, due in part to lack of family resources.
- Juvenile delinquency court is a civil court, an important distinction from adult criminal court. The focus of juvenile court is on youth and family needs.
- Many children come to the juvenile justice system after having contact with other county agencies. Are there ways to address problems before kids get to the juvenile justice system?
- Present challenges include the criminalization of “normal” bad behavior. We need as a community to distinguish between criminal behavior and behavior that is the result of trauma, abuse, addiction, undiagnosed mental illness, hunger, or acting in self-defense.
- 31 percent of Latino children, 28 percent of black children, and 14 percent of other children of color live in poverty, versus 12 percent of white children. Offenders representing minority groups make up 70 percent of those serving time in prison, and over 80 percent of youth in the Division of Juvenile Justice are youth of color.
- Best practices: We need to see what is working and apply. Some examples presented included:
 - Housing and employment: recent studies in Washington State on reentry clients found that ex-offenders offered housing vouchers or related programs showed reduced levels of recidivism.
 - Studies of re-entry clients receiving employment referrals, job training, or subsidized employment showed reduced recidivism, increased earnings, and reduced technical violations.

- Allen noted the importance of stability and financial security to a young child. He referenced a graphic in his presentation showing that higher degrees of stability/financial security when a child is aged 2-5 coincide with improved school achievement in later years.
- Families that need to migrate because of high housing costs face a destabilizing loss of community and social safety nets, and are an emerging dynamic.

Recommendations to Task Force:

- Continue to support efforts to divert and/or offer informal probation to youth committing low-level offenses.
- Further explore transition age youth programs under pilot by five counties, whereby certain young (age 18-21) offenders can serve time in juvenile hall rather than county jail and have charges dismissed upon completion of rehabilitation program (AB 12).
- Expand cross-agency collaboration to reduce effects of poverty and eliminate continued involvement in the justice system (through data sharing and structure).
- Develop a multi-faceted commitment to understand and deal with causes of higher rates of poverty and over-representation in the justice systems and foster care for youth and adults of color.
- Inclusion of training in financial literacy, job readiness, credit and asset management.
 - Example: in San Francisco, youth can work while in custody, set aside funds for restitution, and gain a sense of responsibility.
- Efforts must be family-centered, trauma-informed, and community-based whenever possible.
- Awareness of children of incarcerated parents, and the challenges that adult incarceration poses.
- Better tracking of data to understand challenges with income disparity for juvenile justice system involved youth.

Task Force questions/comments:

- A TF member asked whether we should include a specific recommendation relating to lead poisoning, indicating it has a huge impact on cognitive development and juvenile justice involvement.
- A TF member asked if children are screened for trauma when entering the juvenile justice system. Allen indicated that in San Francisco, all children are screened and linked to appropriate behavioral agencies. Officers are required to evaluate history of exposure to trauma.
- A TF member raised the ACLU class action lawsuit in Riverside County challenging the County's informal probation program for children committing low-level offenses and those deemed "at risk" of future offenses. The ACLU has challenged the program stating that it is

punitive and ineffective, and that it places children under probation supervision for normal childish behavior.

VII. Child Welfare – Angie Schwartz, Alliance for Children’s Rights

Presentation Highlights:

- The federal safety net for CWS has been disintegrating, and the remaining elements are under threat.
 - Eligibility for Title IV-E funds, which support children both in and out of formal foster care, has been linked to 1996 eligibility criteria for the old AFDC program. The lack of adjustment for cost-of-living has resulted in major reductions (Federal Title IV-E funds have decreased by 14 percent since 2004).
 - Child welfare now relies more heavily on other (general) safety net programs, including TANF, Medicaid, and SSI. These programs, however, have also experienced reductions in recent years, and are threatened with more cutbacks in the future.
- As a result, the financial burden for supporting CWS has shifted from the Federal Government to state and local governments.
 - Between 2004 and 2014, the state/local share went from 53 percent to 57 percent, while the federal share dropped from 47 percent to 43 percent.
- The added financial pressure on state/local governments has had negative impacts.
 - More child abuse and neglect cases are dealt with through family-supported services or diversion of cases to informal kinship care.
 - However, kinship caregivers are less likely than foster care providers to receive adequate financial support, training, peer support groups and respite care.
 - Within the formal foster care system, the loss of funding has resulted in fewer community placements and an overreliance on congregate care.
 - Reliance on congregate care is associated with poor outcomes, including higher risk of arrest, higher rates of re-entry into foster care after family reunification; and poor high school graduate rates.
- California’s response is Continuum of Care Reform:
 - Main principles: (1) family-based with strong community connections; (2) services individualized and coordinated; (3) when needed, congregate care should be high-quality, short term, and be just one part of a continuum of care available to youth and young adults; (4) effective accountability and transparency, resulting in continuous quality improvements by the state, the counties, and providers.

- Emergency caregiver support – funding for family-based support is available from the time of placement and is equal to the basic foster care rate. Enables children to be placed immediately with family with appropriate support and services to meet child's needs.
- \$145 million has been invested in past four years for foster care provider recruitment and retention. Emphasis has been on development of specialized foster homes to serve higher-needs youth.
- Extensions to foster care enable non-minor dependents to obtain educational and employment training (to age 21).
- Support for transition-aged youth (up to age 26), including specialized housing, increased funds to support expectant and parenting youth, and expansion of the Chafee education and training voucher program.
- Other areas of need/potential solutions:
 - Expanded housing supply for youth in extended foster care and youth with specialized needs. Additional resources for such things as security deposits on rentals. Housing navigators to build relationships with landlords in high cost, low-supply markets and to help youth learn how to be responsible renters.
 - Expansion of Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children.
 - Train providers and social workers to screen youth exiting care for eligibility for benefits, such as SSI, CalFresh, CalWORKS, Medi-Cal, and housing assistance.

Task Force questions/comments:

- One member asked about how immigrants fare in the CWS system. Angela indicated that California is more generous than most states but can be better. For example, with respect to CWS, there is no difference based on immigration status (true on both child and kinship provider side).

VIII. Child Welfare – Will Lightbourne, Director, CDSS

Presentation Highlights:

- Will discussed circumstances through which families come into contact with the child welfare system, based on Emily Putnam-Hornstein's work.
 - Looking at an entire childbirth database for 2006-07 linked to the child welfare databases over 5 years, the researchers looked at who appeared in the child welfare system
 - Of the 2-year birth cohort, 160,000 children were reported by 5 years old (15% of the whole cohort).

- Of the 160,000, about 56,000 had experienced CWS-substantiated abuse.
- Factors associated with substantiated abuse included: low birth rates, younger maternal ages, lack of paternal identification, and Medicaid coverage (used here as a proxy for poverty).
 - 8.1 percent of children born under Medicaid experienced abuse.
- Twenty percent of those that had not received prenatal care had substantiated abuse cases.
- Most children in the CWS system have experienced trauma; thus it is important that we integrate CWS and mental health services. Stability in care/services is very important.
- Large disparity in referrals. Of children/families contacted by CWS, about 2.2 percent were removed from homes (range from 1.1 percent in Marin up to 6 percent in northern rural and interior counties).
- Observational bias exists based on race, poverty/income. Will noted large difference in referrals between eastern and western Santa Clara County.
- Will noted legislative activity to fix financing conundrum created by passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act. Under this act, federal funds traditionally used to support foster care are now eligible to be used to support prevention services.
- Will stated that CA opposed the Family First Prevention Services Act because it appeared to be targeted more against foster care than child abuse generally.
 - The Family First Prevention Services Act specifically allows federal funds to be used to support evidenced-based family prevention practices (including mental health treatment, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and home visiting programs) if the child is deemed to be a candidate for entry into foster care. It permits federal participation in residential treatment programs for parents as well as funding for kinship navigator activities. It also stipulates that congregant care can only be used in narrow circumstances (e.g., severe abuse/trafficking, etc.).

Task Force questions/comments:

- Following Will's presentation, TF members discussed the merits of the Families First Prevention Services Act.

IX. Breakout into Subcommittees and Reports Out to the Full Task Force

The TF then broke into subcommittees for the purpose of developing specific proposals. Following the subcommittee meetings, each chair reported to the full TF progress they have made toward developing recommendations. Brad Williams discussed plans for developing fiscal estimates to help the subcommittees and the full Task Force in their efforts to prioritize recommendations. The meeting concluded with Conway and Will discussing plans for subcommittee conference calls and the August meeting.

- An overall request was made for more guidance on the subcommittee role – i.e., what is the scope? How will this process feed into the whole report? Are we supposed to be coordinating with other subcommittees? The subcommittees' charge is to come up with the comprehensive database recommendations necessary to end deep child poverty and substantially reduce overall child poverty. Will target efforts to greatest need and most cost effectiveness, considering ramp up time.

Subcommittee Reports

Early childhood subcommittee:

Five recommendations:

- Expand flexible parental leave policies
- Expand access to quality early childhood care
- Expand quality improvement in all settings
- Tiered reimbursement rate structure, including for ECE providers
- Integration and strengthening of CA early childhood data systems

Housing and homelessness subcommittee:

- Requested that workgroups meet first at the August meeting.
- Identified 9 potential topic areas with 29 initial ideas within those areas:
 - Rent control/stabilization: require localities that do not meet certain targets to impose State-defined rent stabilization.
 - Increasing housing supply: community land trust, down payment assistance, developer incentives, restrictions on local authority with respect to land use decisions, utilization of State-owned land for housing, establishment of public or infrastructure bank for housing development.
 - People exiting institutions (prisons, jails, foster care, etc.): specialized rental subsidies and associated services, bringing families home statewide (reunifications).

- Rental subsidies: shallow subsidies using cap and trade, case management/housing navigation for non-minor dependents, prohibiting landlord discrimination of section 8.
- Housing support for working poor: landlord insurance for renting to "risky" tenants, reducing cost of student housing on UC and Cal State campuses
- Eviction prevention: legal assistance, arbitration to resolve eviction disputes, state laws for just cause for evictions, tenant education campaign.
- Governance: State homelessness czar, State homelessness database
- Code enforcement and habitability
- State and local revenue policies to address housing

Safety net subcommittee:

- Reviewing full landscape of options and bills to identify priorities.
- Individual task members are looking at various proposals.
- Open to working with other subcommittees; have google doc open to others to weigh in.

Special populations subcommittee:

Big takeaway from first meeting is the framework for how to talk about it.

- Who is in special populations? Broader than just child welfare and Juvenile Justice system youth.
- Recommendations will come from the lens/framework that with investments in education, health care, housing and economic opportunity; there will be fewer kids will be in these special populations. Need both primary preventions (prevent contact with systems) and secondary preventions (youth in care, how supporting them)

Coordinated services subcommittee:

Narrowed recommendations down to 3 ideas, which we went deeper on.

- Create single point of access for families to get connected to services. Include housing, childcare, Medi-Cal, Cal Fresh, school lunches, etc. Need integration between systems – what are the top 5 services accessed by high need families and how can we connect them and remove burden of application? (e.g., County of SF, pilot project with shared database.)
- Look at cross-department alignment. At the Federal government level, 15 federal departments have a MOU about place-based strategies and investments across the country (e.g., Promise Neighborhoods model). What would the model look like in CA?

- Direct services: Place-based efforts – there are 6 Promise Neighborhood grants in CA communities that bring alignment of public/nonprofit/private services. Expand on best practices. Consider connecting with federal efforts through opportunity zones (179 Census tracts designated as high need). Opens the door for development and public/private investment. Align some of that data with CA Promise Neighborhood information, and leverage state resources with opportunity of federal investment.

Workforce development subcommittee:

- Workforce and employment part of broader strategy, not intended to supplant safety net.
- Emphasis on good quality jobs and upward mobility (looking at experience in Workforce Investment Act).
- Recognize that it's going to take multiple interventions over time and across funding streams and programs to get people into jobs.